

SHIBATA JAPANESE GARDEN
(Mt. Eden Nursery)
25941 Industrial Boulevard
Hayward
Alameda County
California

HALS CA-45
CA-45

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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SHIBATA JAPANESE GARDEN AKA MT. EDEN NURSERY

HALS NO. CA-45

Location: 25941 Industrial Boulevard, Hayward, Alameda County, CA
Lat: 37.63195 Long: -122.11288

Significance: The Shibata Garden is what remains of the Mt. Eden Nursery Company in Hayward, California. Mt. Eden Nursery was part of what was once a large and thriving wholesale flower growing industry in the San Francisco Bay Area. Persons of Japanese ancestry started immigrating to California early in the twentieth century. Many worked on building the railroads, others went to the gold mines and other industries. Commercial nurseries in California began after the Gold Rush. By the 1890s large nursery enterprises circled the Bay with greenhouses and fields planted in roses, camellias, shrubs, vines, fruit and ornamental trees. Because Japanese Americans were not permitted to own land they chose to grow crops that produced on smaller lots and in shorter time periods. This is one of the reasons they frequently chose flowers.

The Domoto Brothers, Issei pioneers immigrated to San Francisco in 1884 and established the first commercial flower growing enterprise in Northern California. By 1904, their enterprise was the largest flower-growing business on the West Coast. The Domotos trained many immigrants in floriculture and encouraged them to start their own businesses.

This industry thrived in the Bay Area and led to the establishment of the San Francisco Flower Terminal and a cooperatively owned Japanese California Flower Market which represented dozens of Japanese-owned businesses from around the Bay Area. During World War II these business owners were interned in camps. Some lost their businesses at this time; others arranged to have others continue to operate their nurseries and returned to them after they were released. By the 1960s, California was the national leader in production of carnations, chrysanthemums and roses.

The Shibata Garden was the private garden of the Shibata family who owned and operated Mt. Eden Nursery and lived on the property. The garden has good integrity. The entry gate, the homes, the pond and island, edged pathways, bridges, boulders, garden ornaments (pagodas) and much of the plantings appear to be historic. The restroom building, brick patio, fireplace and shade structure appear to have been added after what would be the period of significance.

History: Zenjuro (or Jinjiro) Shibata started Mt. Eden Nursery Company in Hayward. Originally, they grew vegetables and had fields of flowers. The first greenhouse was constructed in 1918 and was used to grow carnations, but in the mid 1930s they switched to roses as their primary crop. According to the California Florida Plant Company website, "During the internment of Japanese-Americans during the war, friends and neighbors ran the business. The Zapatini Family took care of the Mt. Eden Nursery, and returned it to the Shibatas as prosperous as ever, a shining example of generosity during a dark time. After the war's end, Mt. Eden came under the leadership of the oldest son, Yoshimi, supported by his three younger brothers. In 1957, Mr. Shibata founded the California Florida Plant Company and under his leadership the company grew to become the premier supplier of carnations in the world. Yoshima Shibata was a floral industry leader for nearly 70 years. He is the former president of the Wholesale Florist and Florist Supply Association and served on the boards of directors of the Sumitomo Bank of California and the California State Chamber of Commerce, as well as Roses, Inc., the national trade association of rose growers."

During World War II the Shibata family was interned at Tule Lake. After the war they went to Chicago, Illinois and then returned to their home at Mt. Eden. At one point the nursery included 34 greenhouses, a boiler house, and a packing house in addition to the residence. The Online Archive of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, has a black and white photograph of Jinjiro and Yoshima Shibata inside one of their greenhouses, taken in June of 1945.

Description: The Mt. Eden Nursery greenhouses, that were once used to grow roses, have been replaced by a business park that now surrounds what were once the private gardens surrounding the Shibata residence. One enters the garden from the business park parking lot walking through an eight foot high double wooden gate with a traditional peaked roof and elaborately detailed elements. The garden is enclosed by a six foot wood fence consisting of 1x6 vertical boards topped with 2x2 vertical members spaced to allow views into the traditionally designed Japanese garden. The path at the gate includes one large flat stone on both sides, and 12" square concrete pavers that are interspersed with 12" square units of small, rounded pebbles.

Once inside the gate the architecture of the big box business park buildings is screened by evergreen and coniferous trees – mostly redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*), casurina, magnolia and a variety of pines. The path here is topped with pea gravel, there are several large, sculptural boulders (4-6' in dimension), and the first of several stone pagodas found in the garden, each about 4 feet in height.

Offset by a jog is a curved wooden bridge that rises up as it traverses a curvilinear shaped pond that is lined with stones of varying sizes. The bridge railing is wood with simple detailing and a 2x6 cap, painted red. At the far end of the, bridge

there is a concrete and stone patio that widens out to about 10' x 12'. There is a large Tam juniper at the pond edge. One section of the pond edge is defined by wood logs set on end – these jut in and out to form a strong serpentine line.

From the bridge walking left, on a three foot wide concrete and stone path, leads to an elaborately detailed entrance to the residence. There is lawn at either side of the path, a sculpted pine, and a low, busy palm to the right of the door. There is a large Sycamore tree at the corner of the house and beyond that a small brick and glass greenhouse with a U-shaped workbench inside. To the left of the greenhouse is a heavy-timber gateway, painted white, and a path to a gate in the perimeter fence suggesting that originally probably led into the nursery.

At the rear of the house there is a small elaborately detailed structure (about 10' x 15') made of concrete block, glass block and wood. One can see Japanese joints in the roof structure. The building is used to store tools and garden supplies. A newer, and similarly sized and detailed structure, is adjacent to this building and is a restroom. A line of casurina trees provides screening inside the fence and an impressive line of timber bamboo is behind the house. Much of this area here is paved with asphalt and there is a double, vehicular gate in the fence suggesting that they use this area as a corporation yard for the garden.

As you walk around the back of the residence there is a dense planting of a smaller, much more closely spaced bamboo at the side of the house that creates a dense, visual screen. At the front of the residence there is a brick patio with a stone fireplace and wood shade structure approximately 16' x 32'. A brick path, 3 feet wide, leads to a door to the house and two wide steps lead back to the pond. The brick patio, fireplace and shade structure appear to have been constructed in the 1950s.

Between the brick patio and the pond there is a stone path consisting of flat stones – 8" – 12" in diameter, three across forming a path 30" wide. The path curves to the right and terminates with a boulder at the residence. To the left, the path transitions to flat, flagstones set in dirt and the edge of the path is defined by pieces of 3"x6" wood members set on end 5" high. The wood pieces are offset from each other to form a zigzag pattern. As you walk around this path, that encircles the pond, the wood members on the left side change to rocks. The area to the left of the path has been raised and graded to form mounded areas. At the edge of the path the rock wall varies from 12" to 20" high.

At the far end of the pond, furthest from the house a grouping of large boulders are set on end and are set back from the edge of the pond. This appears to have been the source of water for the pond. Originally there was very likely a small waterfall here. A line of rounded boulders, along the path route, are placed so one can step over the water that would have flowed from the falls to the pond. This spot is the focal point of the primary view from the residence and is accented by

the waterfall, a mature Japanese Maple to the left and a Cherry Tree in the background. The pond with its reflecting surface and floating water lilies are in the foreground.

Continuing along the path one comes to a timber bridge made from a single piece of wood about 2' wide, 4" thick and 20' long. This bridge leads to an island planted with grass, pine, thuya, myoporum, willow and pyracantha. Another bridge takes one back to the path (the second bridge has been replaced with pressure treated lumber).

Sources: California Florida Plant Company:
http://www.cfpc.com/aboutus_mrshibata_bio.html

The Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley. OnLine Archive of California
<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft2c60049p/?brand=oac4>

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National Japanese American Historical Society, (415) 921-5007 or
www.njahs.org

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Van Laan, Gordon. "A Penny a Tree: The History of the Nursery Industry in California", 1850-1976, pp.6-9.

Historian: Chris Pattillo, Landscape Architect, March 20, 2010
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Shibata residence with the pond in the foreground, and willow, redwood, pine and oak in the background screening the industrial park beyond (Chris Pattillo, March 14, 2010).



Entrance to the Shibata garden with traditional Japanese detailing and hardware (Chris Pattillo, March 14, 2010).